

Washington State Ferries Long-Range Strategic Plan



Thursday, June 9, 2005
North Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting
6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
Race Road Fire Station
1164 Race Road, Coupeville



Purpose of Tonight's Meeting

- Share information on key challenges facing WSF – ridership growth, terminal and vessel capacity constraints, boat waiting times, roadway traffic impacts, financial constraints.
- Discuss specific service choices for addressing key chokepoints and bottlenecks.
- Answer questions and obtain input on the strategic choices.

Why is WSF Updating its Long-Range Strategic Plan?

- WSF's last Plan was completed in 1999 – much has changed since, including the Legislature's implementation of the I-695 funding cuts, which significantly reduced funding for WSF operations.
- The Ferries are already full on many sailings and more growth is coming.
- The System has aging vessels and terminals which need upgrading just to keep pace with current demand.
- WSF must determine how to best serve the public given all of the System's needs and limited financial resources.
- Communities' plans, and WSF's plans for service and investments, are related.

Why Do We Need a Plan?

The WSF Plan will become a part of the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP), scheduled for adoption by the end of 2005. The WTP is required by state law, and will form the basis for setting the state transportation system's investment priorities.

Why Plan Now for 2011 and Beyond?

Ferry service improvements take time to implement. Because of long lead times required for building new vessels and improving terminals, and the long-term nature of such investments, WSF is planning now for the service it will provide in 2011-2030.



When Will the Plan Take Effect, and What Will it Do?

When the Plan is completed in December 2005, it will guide future WSF decisions on services and investments:

- **Services:** it will have a route-specific program including route structures, frequencies and carrying capacities.
- **Investments:** it serves as a 25-year strategic investment plan for vessel and terminal improvements.



WSF is making investments now in vessels and terminals, based on its current Capital Program.

- New vessels have been ordered to replace older vessels that are being retired.
- Preservation work and improvements are being planned for terminals at Anacortes, Bainbridge Island, Port Townsend and Mukilteo, on varying schedules beginning in 2005.
- The Eagle Harbor Maintenance facility requires major repairs to continue efficient upkeep of WSF vessels and terminals. Construction will run from mid-2005 through mid-2009.

Washington State Ferries Routes by Service Area





Multiple Constraints Affect WSF's Ability to Handle Growth

WSF is a Financially Constrained System

- Significant limits on its financial resources require WSF to look closely at the operating and capital costs of any possible choice.

Systemwide Chokepoints and Bottlenecks Constrain WSF's Capacity and Efficiency

- **Fauntleroy Terminal:** Operates at capacity now and is not able to accommodate projected growth in demand from Vashon/Southworth. Expanding the terminal is not an option, according to the City of Seattle.
- **Colman Dock** in downtown Seattle is a hub for the system. WSF is studying options for a new facility on the site to improve operating efficiencies and accommodate increasing demand.
- **Central Sound Passenger Service:** High growth in passenger demand is expected on Central Sound routes.
- **Weekends/Summer Season:** Continuing growth in the recreational travel market on weekends and during the summer on Edmonds-Kingston, Whidbey Island routes and Anacortes-San Juan Islands routes presents capacity challenges in those corridors.
- **San Juan Islands** terminal constraints include one-slip terminals in the Islands and the limited ability of adjacent road systems to handle ferry traffic.

Landside Constraints are Major Factors

- Traffic congestion issues in downtown Seattle and at Fauntleroy will be major issues for the City of Seattle.
- SR 305 on Bainbridge Island has significant capacity and congestion issues that will be considered in the Plan.
- Impacts of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge are also considered.
- Single-slip and single-lane loading at the San Juan Islands Terminals.
- Multimodal terminals at Anacortes, Edmonds, and Mukilteo are being designed to mitigate many of the current landside impacts on these communities.





Systemwide Growth Expectations

- WSF's "baseline" growth projections rely on certain assumptions about service and fares:
 - Service is assumed to be the same as today's, except for the introduction of replacement vessels already purchased.
 - Fares are assumed to continue increasing 5% per year through 2009, with annual increases to match inflation thereafter.
- Given those assumptions, significant growth in ferry ridership is projected through 2030.
 - Westbound vehicle traffic during the evening commute period is projected to rise 24% (1629 additional vehicles) by 2030.
 - Westbound total ridership during the evening commute period is projected to rise 64% (11,015 additional passengers) by 2030.

What do ridership projections take into account?

WSF's projections of future ridership are based on a combination of regional computer model developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council and population data supplied by the Office of Financial Management (OFM) for outlying counties. It includes origin and destination information for all cross-Sound trips, based on population and employment projections. Projections about commuters' decisions also take into account a variety of factors including vessel capacities, driving times and fares.

Historical Context of Systemwide Growth

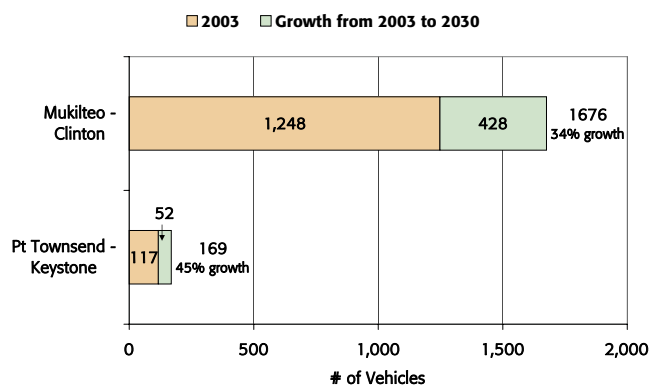
- Between 1987 and 1999, systemwide ferry ridership grew by approximately 50%, as a result of population growth and relatively flat fares (fares declined in inflation-adjusted terms.)
- Since 1999, ridership has declined about 10% throughout the system, a result of the service cutbacks and fare increases that followed voter approval of the tax limits in Initiative 695.
- As of 2004, systemwide ridership was at a similar level as in 1994.
- Future population growth west of Puget Sound is expected to increase demand for ferry service.

Growth in the North Sound

- The overall pattern of growth extends to the North Sound routes – especially Mukilteo-Clinton. Total peak-period traffic on North Sound routes is projected to rise 35% for vehicles and 76% for passengers, by 2030.

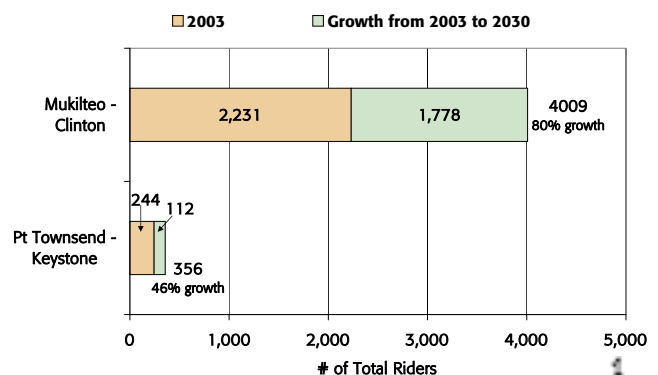
North Sound Vehicles in 2003 and Projected 2030

4-Hour PM Westbound Commuting Peak



North Sound Total Ridership in 2003 and Projected 2030

4-Hour PM Westbound Commuting Peak



North Sound Corridor: Challenges and Choices

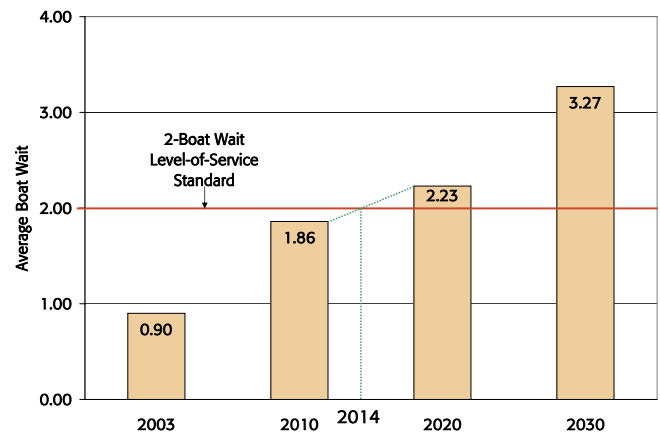
The Mukilteo-Clinton Challenge

- Adding the vehicle-carry capacity needed to meet projected demand will be WSF's challenge on the Mukilteo-Clinton route. Enough capacity must be added to keep the route's level of service standard that vehicles on this route should face no greater than an average 2-boat wait during the 4-hour afternoon commute on a typical weekday in May.

Options for Managing Growth on Mukilteo-Clinton

- Given the projected growth in ridership on the Mukilteo-Clinton route, a third vessel will become necessary in 2014 if the route uses two Expanded Issaquah class boats. Increasing the route's capacity by adding a third Expanded Issaquah class vessel would keep vehicle waits well within the 2-boat wait standard through 2030.

Mukilteo-Clinton Boat Wait Averages, Weekday Westbound PM Peak



The Port Townsend-Keystone Challenge

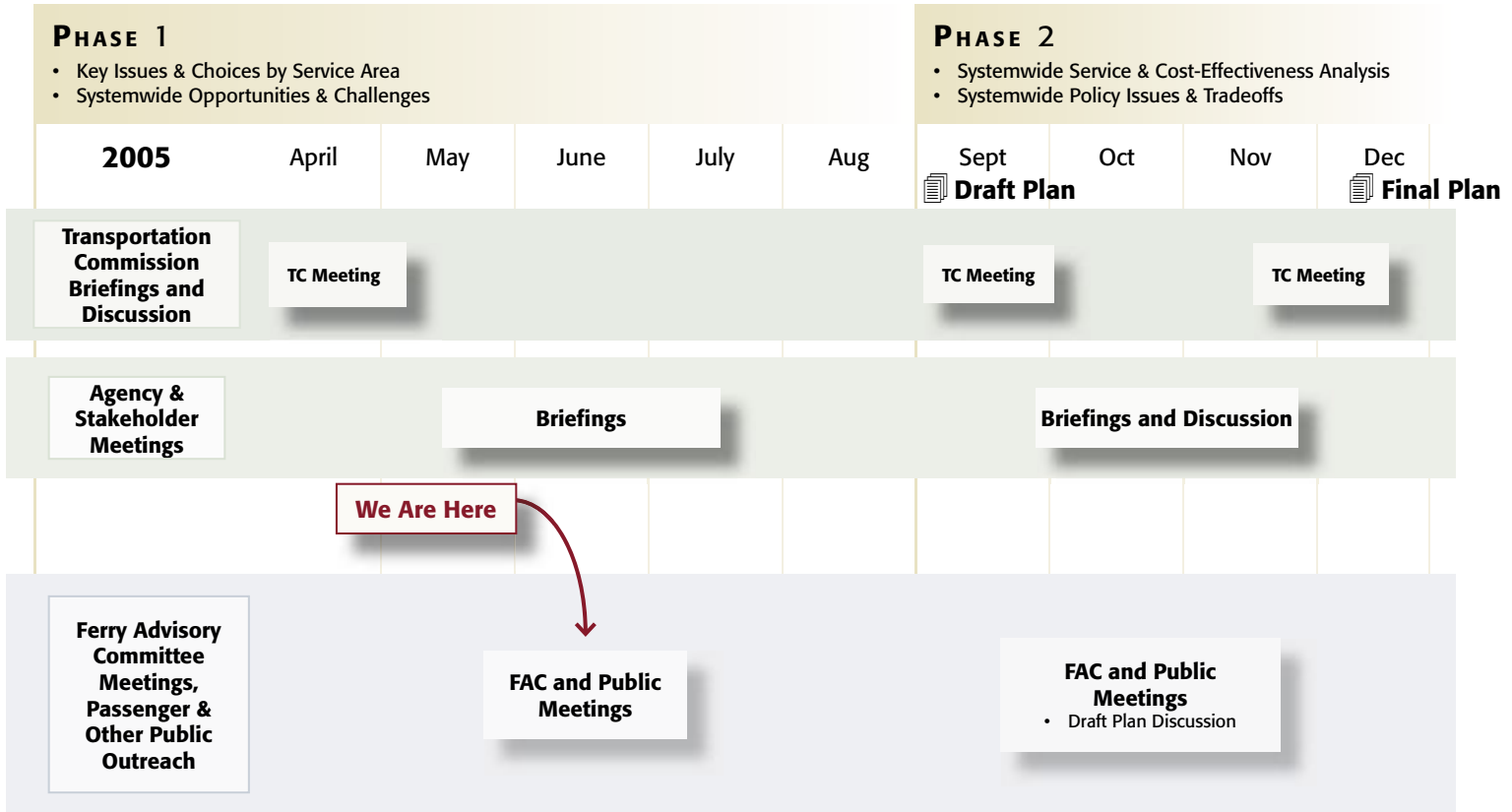
- The Port Townsend-Keystone route will also present WSF with a vehicle capacity challenge, particularly in the summer months when tourist traffic lengthens vehicle wait times.
- WSF has planned to replace the two small vessels currently on this route with a single, 130-car boat. Preliminary traffic analysis, conducted as part of the 2004 Keystone Harbor study, indicated that a second vessel would start to be required during the peak of the summer months in approximately 2015.
- WSF is still in the process of studying vessel options that were identified in the Harbor Study. The options for dealing with projected growth, including future vessel assignments and stages of service improvements, will be dependent on the outcome of the Keystone planning effort that is currently underway. Results will be incorporated into the Long-Range Plan at that time.

North Sound Routes





Project Schedule and Opportunities for More Input



Next Steps

- Opportunity for comment on the Draft Plan in the fall
- Project updates will be available at
http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/your_wsf/corporate_communications/LongRangePlan.htm
- E-mail questions and comments to wsfplanning@wsdot.wa.gov
- Questions by phone: 1-888-808-7977